

NORTHERN JUNKET



This Issue

25¢

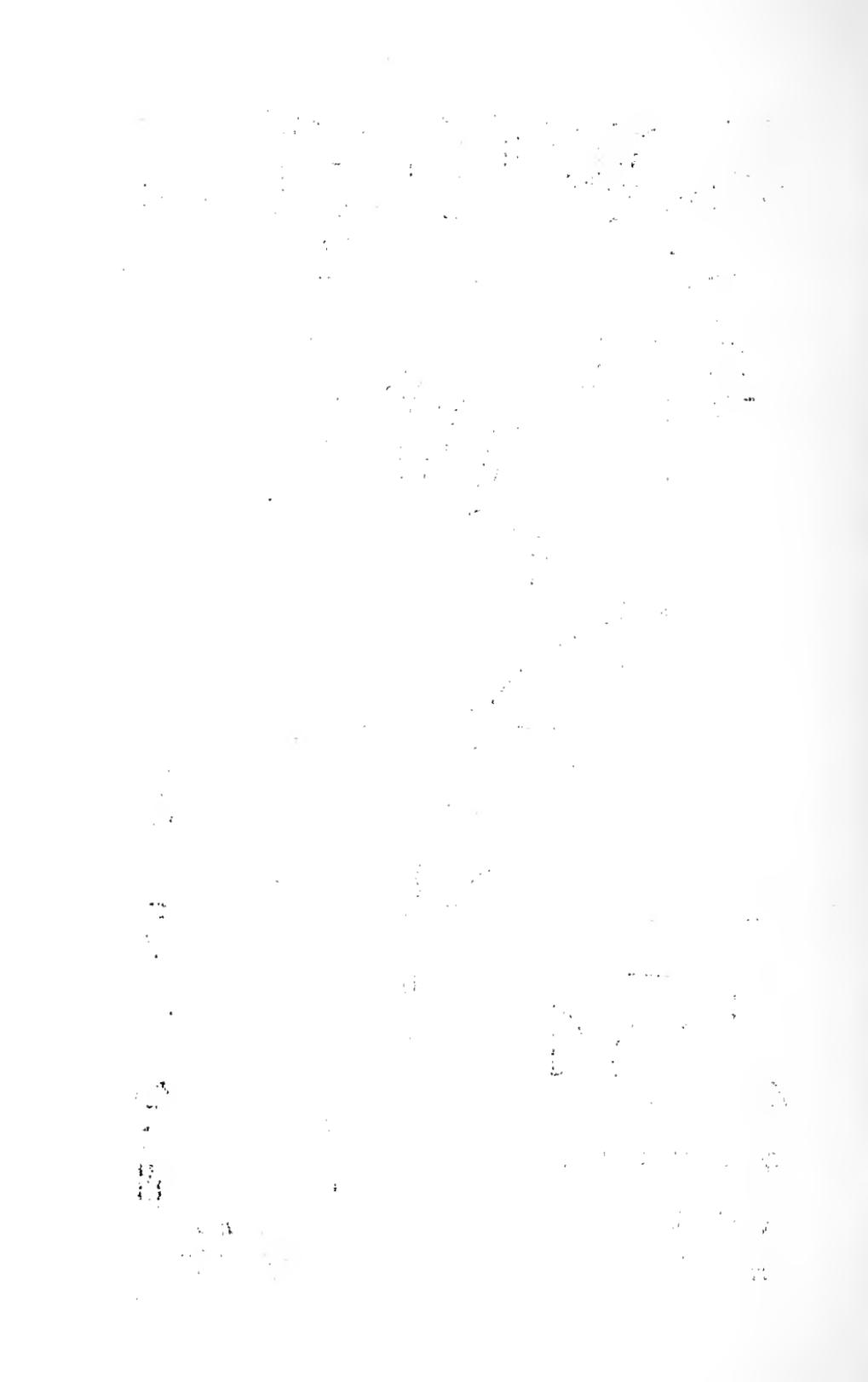
\$2.00 per year

Vol. 1

No. 8

CHRISTMAS

Greetings





TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT

Why do you square dance? If you are one of the nine out of ten, you will answer "Because it's fun". A correct enough answer of course. If you are the tenth person, your reply might be "because it is good wholesome recreation, all ages can do it." These are sensible answers. It has always seemed to me however, that the real reason lies deeper under the surface. It is an expression of a deep-rooted gang instinct which is fundamental in the human race.

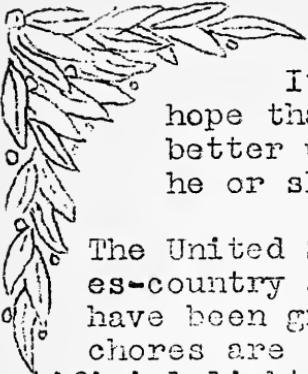
Good leaders recognize this and guide their group accordingly. They will insist on square dancing in proper environment and atmosphere.

What makes atmosphere at a square dance? Not ornate decorations surely. And not necessarily elaborate costumes, though good authentic costume make a good start. It can be created by the knowledge of the value of little customs. A hundred things which in themselves seem unimportant, are the breeders of that subtle something that we call atmosphere.

If you are a GOOD square dancer you will go out of your way to make strangers feel at home at the party, and will deliberately go out of your way to dance ONE square an evening with a newcomer. Surely that is not asking too much. It is one way YOU can help to create good atmosphere. And I do mean YOU.

Sincerely

Ralph Page

 THIS ISSUE

It will soon be Christmas. We hope that every reader will have a far better understanding of Christmas when he or she finishes reading it.

The United States has two Christmas pictures-country and urban. The afternoon shadows have been growing very long lately, and the chores are something that must be done by artificial light. In homes where there are small children there is many a whispered conference, and there are packages to be hidden from prying eyes. For some strange reason, which every parent can guess, the woodbox is kept filled. Mincemeat and pumpkins must be brought up from down cellar, and corn must be popped and strung. Soon father will pick up his axe and, calling the children, will set out to select a tree. There is really no reason why he should go, for the kids have long since picked the tree and can handle the task of getting it well enough by themselves. But the fact is that he wants to share in the excitement, though he would not dream of admitting it. It is all a part of Christmas on the farm.

In the cities, the stores are thronged with shoppers, each intent upon his individual purchases, while the children drift inevitably toward Santa Claus and the wonders of a modern toy department. Trees, decorations, and countless other necessities and luxuries continue to pour into the shopping centers by train, truck, plane and boat. All of these things are immediate sales items, for which the crowds will jostle up to the last moment.

Those are the two Christmas pictures we know. Each will be duplicated many times. But there are other customs in other parts of the world.

To bring some of these pictures to you is the reason for this enlarged issue of the Northern Junket. It has meant a whale of a lot of extra work, but it has been worth it. We only wish we had time to make it bigger. We will forever have a deeper appreciation of the Christmas season than heretofore. Incidentally, we dug up enough material for three or four future Christmas issues, which is something to look forward to.

To every contributor goes our sincere wishes for the merriest Christmas ever and a most prosperous New Year. We wish there was some way to make those statements stronger, but we lack the words to do it. Reading their letters and articles we began to get a Christmas spirit at least a month earlier than ever before. Maybe they did, too. We hope so.

If this Christmas can give a better sense of man's dignity and worth in the sight of his Creator, and a deeper appreciation of the value of his work and his friends, it will indeed be a real and richer Christmas for everyone.

MERRY CHRISTMAS, EVERYBODY.

The Editor

THE OLD-TIMER'S CLUB OF SWANSEA

by

John T. Kenyon

Swansea is a town in Massachusetts just a short way from the Rhode Island state line, and a good proportion of the club's members are residents of Rhode Island, a fact which makes it seem a Rhode Island club.

The Old Timer's Club was formed nearly 30

years ago by a man and his wife who loved square and old-time dancing, and invited a group of their friends to a dance in their kitchen. Everyone had such a good time they met again and again, and added to the number of their group. They soon outgrew anyone's kitchen and held the dances in a small barn next door to the home of the founder of the club. This barn was later converted into a very homey little dance hall, where at the present time, a square dance is held every other Saturday night. On the walls of the hall are hung various items of old time interest--- some really antique, others merely humorous--all made more interesting by the little black cards tacked over each, on which are written in white pencil bits of whimsy typical of Mr. Fenner, a charter member of the club, owner of the hall, and who, until his death this last September, had been club prompter for a number of years and a square dance caller most of his 76 years.

Membership is carefully limited to 100. Some of those who danced every dance on club night and now are physically unable to dance, have gracefully accepted honorary membership, in order to make way for younger, more active members. Very few ever willingly drop their membership. Maybe it is true love for square dancing that has held the club together, maybe it is the untiring interest of some of the original members, who are still active today. Whatever the bond, there is a good feeling of friendliness and kindness that makes every dance one more "best time". The members are of various extractions-English, Scotch, Irish, Swedish, Portugese, Yankee--but all are New Englanders.

The club dances the "Loomis Lancers" as the first dance after intermission at every session. It has become practically a tradition of the club.

REVERIE OF AN
OLD FIDDLER
by
Will Ayer



The wood fire in the kitchen
stove throws shadows on the
wall,
The kettle sings a merry song-sweet music to
us all,
While the tallow candles fitful blaze, scarce
more than a firefly's gleam
Call back the days of long ago, like the shadow
of a dream.
Three score and more, of years have passed, to
where? I do not know.
Upon life's screen I seem to see a picture,
framed in snow,
And hear the sleigh bells jingle, as with robes
tucked good and tight
We start for a neighbor's friendly home, for a
Country Dance tonight.

A dozen couples fill the house. Two fiddlers
for good measure
Are all one needs to guarantee a night of
perfect pleasure.
Gramp and Gram-Pa and Ma-and even Bub and Sis
Find years make little difference on occasions
such as this.
The fiddlers tune their fiddles and put rosin
on the bow,
"Take your partner, form in line. Already now?
Let's go".
First Money Musk; a Plain Quadrille; then Lady
Walpole's Réel;
Hull's Victory; Chorus Jig; French Four, all
danced on even keel.

The spirit of the dance is seen in tempo and
in grace,
And in the light of pleasure shining on every
radiant face.
Flying feet balance-swing-right and left-
Ladies chain-
Then chasse down the center to the foot and
back again.
Forgotten are the hours of toil-on farm and
in the home,
Rest and peace right here are found, and no
one cares to roam
To far off lands, where foreign tongues are
hard to understand.
A Country Dance is heaven enough right here
in Yankee Land.

Fiddler Bill.

The Keene High School(N.H.) Square Dance Club recently sponsored a square dance jamboree in the Symonds School auditorium for all of the high schools in the Monadnock Region of New Hampshire.

This first event of its kind in New Hampshire-and perhaps in New England,drew one hundred fifty high school square dancers. There were exhibitions by students from Keene,Hancock, and Vilas high schools. Don Barker,K.H.S. '49,now a student at Keene Teachers College,called throughout the evening. Ralph Page was guest caller.

Guy Burrill,K.H.S. teacher, and director of the Square Dance Club, explained that this jamboree was but the first of several planned for the school year. He hopes that other schools in the region will follow the lead of K.H.S. and sponsor similar events each month. Representatives of eight high schools attended.



WHAT ONE SCHOOL IS DOING

Fairlee, Vermont

Three years ago I started teaching a few simple square dances to the children in the 5th, 7th, and 8th grades of the Fairlee School. I had an enrollment of under twenty, so I was able to have a planned recreation program with considerable individual follow-up analysis. From the first, the children "took to" square dancing. Here was plenty of action to furnish an outlet for their youthful exuberance. The action gradually developed into physical coordination, which, under careful instruction and close supervision, resulted in pleasure and satisfaction realized as new changes were conquered and ability to follow directions rapidly and accurately improved.

We used records with combined music and calls; records furnishing only the music, the calls to be deciphered from an accompanying handbook; and the instructional records, from which the children first heard the explanation of the dance timed so that they might walk out the changes, with sufficient time to think them out, and then do the dance with the same instructor calling the figures.

Following exposure to the three types of records, I turned my English classes loose on record-analysis and preparation of comment cards. We have done much work along this line on books, so this opened a new line of analysis. We have enjoyed a constructive, pleasant correspondence with Ed Durlacher, which has more than superficial

value since he personally led an afternoon square dance party for those same children in our own small town. The letter writing is still fresh!

As the children evaluated their own accomplishment they became aware of new needs and new phases of pride were evidenced. Here, I observed a boy slow to work his way into school society-already in; and there, a self-conscious girl showed more general confidence. Through square dancing we were able to share experiences outside the expected realm. Two winters we have taken part in the Old Fashioned Community Dancing School, where the children have had a related outside-school-experience. Here age-barriers were removed, and interested parents and friends became more interested.

Our course of study has NOT been neglected. The quotient of accomplishment has been raised. We have learned much of value as concerns etiquette--these boys no longer leave their girls in the middle of the floor at the end of the dance. We have no gangling adolescents. We hear very little silly chatter having to do with "boy loves girl." Through pleasant channels we have learned to listen well and follow instructions accurately. This certainly carries over into all courses. Parents have been helped, too.

Square dancing lends itself to a better understanding of social and democratic skills. It offers us teachers an effective means of developing in our boys and girls, during their formative years, the personal qualities that will enable them to stand on sound footing with their fellow beings through life.

(condensed from the
Country Dancer)

Frances D. Kiely, Prin.
Fairlee Village School
Fairlee, Vt.

FAIRLEE NOTES

Herb Warren
reporting



For their Fourth Annual Hunter's Ball, Nov. 30, the V.E.W. staged a dancing party that made a tremendous hit with all parties concerned. Prentice Barker, skillful old hand from Londonderry, did a superb piece of work in calling and directing the dancing. With Jimmy Packard's Orchestra in top rhythmic form, the dancers took to the program enthusiastically.

The program featured square dances-every other one-and offered a wide variety of tried and tested Vermont calls, rarely if ever heard hereabouts. Good coaching from behind the mike aroused the dancer's interest, gained their hearty cooperation, and worked out beautifully. Even the Squirrel Cage, new and a bit tricky, could not dampen the dancer's ardor for trying something new: hit or miss at first, then all hit, with the line weaving in and out rhythmically back into position.

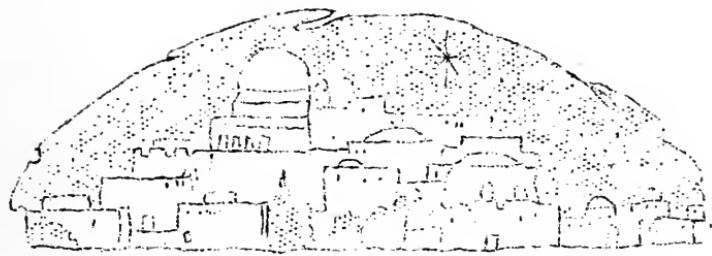
When an orchestra and a caller really get into teamwork their first evening together, some people wonder what one does to play up to the other. Queried on this point, George Packard said: "Prent" knows his stuff, knows what he wants, and makes it clear to everyone: we just play along." "Prent's" reply to the same inquiry was: "I work on rhythm; the Packard Orchestra has a rhythmic beat and holds it; I can go the limit on that; it's hard to beat." Morning after commentators stressed the various parts of the program that made it the grand-good-time event of the season, reason enough for making dancing parties like it part of Fairlee's winter schedule.

Mrs. Harold Sargent entertained the young people of the Square Dance group recently at a family style dine and dance party. The supper was a bountiful supply of venison with all the fixings. Scarcely were napkins laid aside when somebody suggested dancing. A matter of moments and records were on the player; a flick of the switch and out came that familiar voice, strong and clear; "Honor Your Partner-Honor Your Corner", and the dance was on. Active participants were Joyce Carpenter, Janice Chandler, Patty Jobin, and Betty Jane Priest, well squired by Freddie Hayward, Dave Sargent, Pawey Sargent, and Del Schubert. The only stag member of the party was Bensi Sargent, who graciously relieved now and then an Upper Room elder long enough to demonstrate Lower Room versions of the correct techniques for swings and turns done in the nick of time. Side-line participants, besides the host and hostess, were Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Kiely, Mrs. Vera Hodge, and Herbert Warren. A few rounds of Bingo furnished variety for the evening's program, with everybody in. All the elements were there to make up a good kind of party for everybody; family and friends of differing ages and interests getting together on a basis of having a good time and enjoying each other-small-scale model of a regular community get-together.

At the November meeting of the Fairlee Recreational Council, Mrs. Harold Sargent was asked to investigate the interest for the participation of adults in the Vermont Country Dance Festival in Barre early in 1950.

Winner of the V.F.W. Deer Derby was John Lang with a buck weighing 235 pounds.





Khmer Customs

Customs and Legends



WHEN I WAS A GIRL IN GERMANY
by Hildegarde Glass

How time does fly! Last summer we thought Thanksgiving would never come, and here I am in the midst of preparations for this lovely family holiday. Doesn't seem possible that Christmas is coming right along too. Of course, having been born in Germany, my Christmas season lasts from the 6th of December until New Years. Would you like me to tell about it?

On the evening of December 5th, our mother used to tell us the Saint Nicolas legends and Christmas stories, and before bed time we sang the St. Nicolas songs. Then we children put our slippers on our night table, and with mother's help we wrote little notes with our wishes, and then went to bed. We knew St. Nicolas would come that very night to ask our parents about our behavior the previous year, and depending on their information, we either found goodies on our night table, or a switch, and of course our note with our wishes for Christmas had disappeared. This day, December 6th, the feast day of St. Nicolas, always opened the Christmas Season. From that day on, our whole household started preparations for Christmas. Mother started making her famous Christmas cookies-thousands of them-twenty different kinds. The pungent, tantalizing fragrance coming from the kitchen, heightened

our excitement. And what were the children doing all the time? They were just as busy as little bees, also preparing for Christmas.

We used to meet in different homes to work on gifts for our parents. It was always impressed upon us, that handmade gifts meant so much more than gifts that money could buy. We locked ourselves into a room and there we stitched away on slippers, ties, showtowels, mittens and other articles too numerous to mention. My brother made footstools, shoeshine boxes etc. And even our Father seemed bursting with secrets. He used to sneak into the house and disappear into his own room; in fact we all had our individual hiding places. And when supper time came around we would all assemble around our table with the most wistful and happy smiles on our faces.

And before we knew it, the thirteenth of December arrived, and with it St. Lucia Day. Now before I tell you about this holiday, which originated in Sweden, I must tell you who St. Lucia was. She was born in Sicily in the fourth century and one of the early christian legends says, that she cut out her eyes, because their beauty attracted a heathen nobleman. She was denounced a Christian and condemned to death during the reign of Diocletian. The observance of St. Lucia's festival has come down through the centuries to modern times, especially throughout Scandinavia and parts of Germany. Even today, some old folks whisper that the Lucia bride, clothed in white and crowned with light can be seen between 3 and 4 in the morning on December 13, moving across icy lakes and snow covered hills, with food and drink for the people of the parish. This Lucia legend is loved by the hospitable folks of Sweden and Germany. On December 13, St. Lucia's birthday, you see young

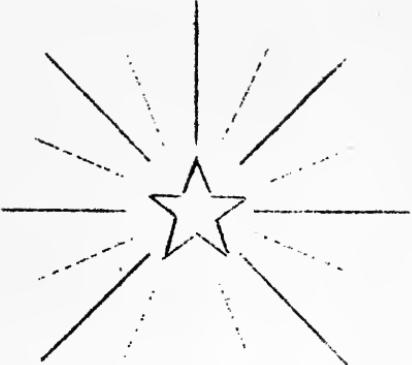


girls enacting the role of the legendary Lucia bride by visiting households at dawn with trays of coffee and cake. Sometimes Lucia makes her rounds alone, but often she is accompanied by boys and girls of the parish. Girls all wear long, white gowns and carry white candles. Boys also wear white, and tall peaked hats decorated with stars and moon cut-outs.

In the homes however, Lucia is usually represented by the oldest daughter of the family. St. Lucia is the embodiment of Christmas spirit, with her white gown, crimson sash, and stockings, and a leaf crown with nine lighted candles. Much of the charm of the Lucia fest lies in the opportunity it gives these young daughters to entertain.

I was 15 years old when I enacted the role of St. Lucia the first time. It was just like a coming out party. A long table was set in the living room with all our best china and silver. A copper bowl, filled with delicately silvered twigs was the centerpiece. Three branch candlesticks with white candles were placed at either end of the table. There were candles on the mantle, in the windows, and on small tables. When time to serve arrived, electric lights were turned off, the candles lit, and Lucia with her helpers entered, singing a Christmas carol. She carried a copper tray, filled with Speculatius and Pfefferkuchen, and went to each guest to offer those delicious cookies. Her helpers furnished china, silver, and napkins from the party table. After refreshments had been served, everybody gathered around the piano to sing hymns. The next day we went back to our preparations for Christmas. St. Lucia day had only heightened our

C 4



spirit of Christmas, and we felt still more, that the very heart of it is the fun of giving happiness to others.

When finally Christmas Eve arrived with its happy giving and receiving, our house was virtually aglow with Christmas spirit. A

bell invited us to the living room. There, in our baywindow, stood our Christmas tree in all its splendor, with its shining array of rare old ornaments and shimmering tinsel; with cookies and marzipan and chocolaterings. Underneath the tree was the creche, to remind us of Him, whose birthday we were celebrating.

Beside the tree was a long table which looked like a mosaic of hard, soft, and chocolate candies, all wrapped in shiny tin-foil. Each child had a part of the table with his name in full in chocolate letters, and gifts piled high. And all over the living room and dining room, on every buffet table and credenz were big glass, china, and wooden bowls filled with Christmas cookies. There were Zimtsterne, Chokoladenherzen, Spritzgebäckenes, Katzenpfoten, Muscheln, Cedarbrot Cellarkringel, Speculatius, Baseler Leckerly, at least 5 different kinds of Lebkuchen, Pfeffernusse, Springerle, Anisplatzchen, Vanilleplatzchen, Aachener Printen etc.

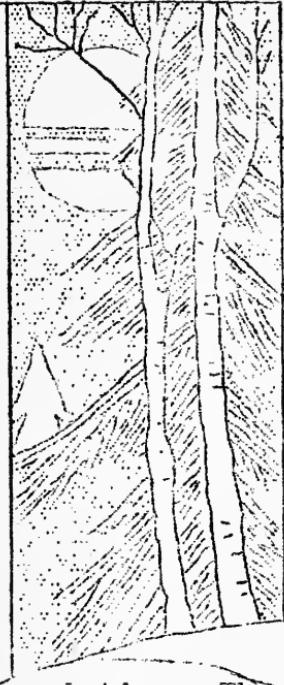
There was a whole month of exciting preparations; there was childrens' faith and confidence, and health and warmth and love, all wrapped up into a few minutes and these minutes stretched into a few weeks. A holiday was really a holiday, and a feast a feast. The Christmas festivities went on without perceptable let-up

from early December to the first of January and ended there in a blaze of glory. All the neighbors and friends; friends whom we never saw during the year, dropped in to celebrate with us. We had open house every day. After celebrating New Years Eve, we children invited our friends to "plunder" the tree, which meant nothing more than to dismantle it. But even that was a ceremony, since it was laden with all kinds of goodies. Every child was permitted to keep every cookie and piece of candy it took down, and the ornaments were taken down with loving hands and carefully packed away for another year. I brought quite a few of these old ornaments with me and every year our son seeks them out and fondles them as though they were human. And then I tell him again, of the Christmas of my childhood but, I also tell him, that gifts and trimmings do not make Christmas. They are the overflow of goodwill. The real Christmas is the heart warming friendliness, that reaches beyond your own family circle to other families--other peoples --the loving kindness, that should live all year long, that deep feeling we call Christmas spirit, in Germany, America, all over the world.

Because of the pagan company it had to keep before, early Christians endeavored, for a time, to ban mistletoe along with holly from the Christmas greens used for their festival decorations. But they winked at the custom of kissing under sprigs of the berry clusters, possibly welcoming kisses as a vast improvement over sacrifices. So mistletoe was accepted as the green wand that turned Merry Christmas into Merry Kissmas.



GREEN MOUNTAIN CHRISTMAS



by Herb Warren

Christmas has always been a widely celebrated day in the Maple Sugar Belt. In the era of the famous red flannels, before the invention of the modern week-end, the Green Mountain e'er was accustomed to slight his work for a day, or even parts of two, to gather with family or community for the Christmas festivities.

Preparations had to be started well ahead of time, but then anticipation was part of the good time. There was a shapely young spruce or fir balsam to be hauled in from somebody's woodlot--not always to that somebody's knowledge. Decorations were an interesting problem for nimble wits and nimble fingers. Presents fashioned by hand pieced out those bought at the general store. The bounteous supplies of the Five and Ten did not exist.

In some localities Christmas Eve was a family affair with the tree set up in the parlor, opened only for such special occasions; in others it was a grand community get-together in the Town Hall or Church. Each way had its advantages.

In either case one could smell the fragrance of a freshly cut evergreen and see snowy white ropes of home-popped corn strung on thread and laid over and about the branches. Decorations there were too, some definitely "store" variety, but others showing skill and imagination by local talent. Presents were hung on the bran-



ches in a way to give a pleasing effect, an orange here and there made a nice bit of color; some were wrapped tricky and gay--bound to make a great appeal to the many would-be recipients--others were tied up good and strong, plainly marked--sure to arrive safe and sound, plainly marked at the right destination. Now and then there was something special and beribboned; every body could pretty well guess that So and So was trying to make an impression on You Know Who.

The Community Christmas tree had elements of surprise not only for the young folks brought up on the Santa Claus legend but for their elders, who knew better. The possibilities, in things promised and unpromised, were something to conjure with. "Just what I wanted" might be the response after the usher had delivered the present Santa had just announced, or it might drop to, "Bet it's the one they got last year!" Still the air of suspense continued.

However, if by chance the community harbored a village wit of some imagination, there was always the likelihood that some present, more suggestive than practical, might be brought right out before the public eye with the owner's name announced good and loud. Connecting a penny bank with the recognized town pinchpenny, a flaxen-haired doll with the young gallant known to be "waiting on" the blonde belle of the village, or a foot long tin razor with the local never shave might bring forth anything from amused merriment to downright hilarity. All depended on their facial reactions.



While the give-and-take part of the program might be the mainstay of the evening, there were sure to be other features. The accepted good talker of the town would certainly be called upon to make some "appropriate remarks"; members of the younger generation would be expected to take over the matter of "speakin' pieces", an experience more gratifying to fond parents and friends than to its victims themselves. There were always enough friends of music in the community for coming musicians to demonstrate their skills, vocal and instrumental, and also to lead in the singing of traditional Christmas songs.



The evening would be over before anybody realized it: pleasures pass quickly. Townspeople had gathered for a folksy good time, one of the few in the year, and left buoyed up with the feeling of gain in good fellowship and friendliness. In these days of autos, television, and gadgets galore, the demands of an earlier generation for an evening of happy things to remember till next Christmas seem simple, too easily satisfied in comparison with today's way of living. But a Vermonter might reply--or just "horn in"--deliberate-like, "They always have".



From the earliest days of Christian churches, festivals celebrating the birth of Christ have been held. In England this festival was known as Christes messe which meant Christ's mass. From this comes the word Christmas. It is often represented as Xmas because X is the Greek equivalent of Ch and Ch represents Christ.

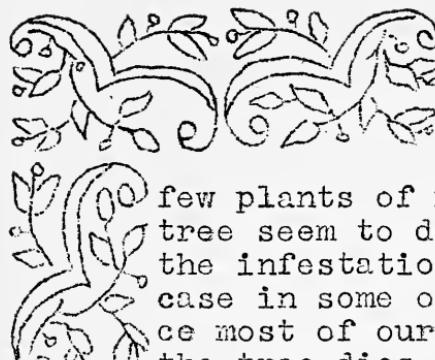


CHRISTMAS MISTLETOE

Mistletoe was often hung over the doors of the pagans in Scandinavian countries to keep out evil spirits. An old Scandinavian legend tells of the seemingly invulnerable god, Balder, who was felled by an arrow made from mistletoe. The tears of his mother, Frigga, became the white berries of the mistletoe, and it was decreed that the plant must never again be used as a weapon. Frigga, who was the goddess of love, henceforth gave a kiss to anyone who passed under the mistletoe. It may be that our modern custom of kissing under the mistletoe comes from this old myth.

The Druids who were members of a pagan religious order in ancient Gaul, England and Ireland held the mistletoe in such reverence that if enemies met under it in the forest, a truce was declared for the day. They believed that only happiness would enter a home when mistletoe hung over the door. At the approach of the Yule season, the mistletoe was cut from the sacred oaks by the Prince of the Druids who used a golden sickle. They also believed it possessed powers of protection against sickness and evil. Later among Christians it came to symbolize the healing powers of Christ.

The peculiar manner in which the plant grows may have had much to do with the superstitions and legends that have grown up about it. It is a parasite and grows in the tops of certain trees. It gets its sustenance from the sap of the tree on which it grows, sending down roots



into the sapwood of the living tree, and actually mingling its wood with that of its host in a firm, inseparable mass. A few plants of mistletoe growing in a tree seem to do no great harm, but when the infestation is great, as is often the case in some of the Western States where most of our Christmas mistletoe comes, the tree dies from the effects of those sapping roots.

There are several species of mistletoe. One is an Eastern species found as far North as the New England States; it also becomes quite common in the South, where it seems to prefer the black gum and sycamore trees to any others. This species of mistletoe is not as prolific as that which grows in California, and a half dozen or so of the green clumps are all that one will usually find in a single tree. In California, however, and other Western States, the mistletoe flourishes, often growing so densely that the tree will appear to be in full leaf in midwinter though the tree's own foliage has fallen.

The plant often grows high in the treetops and it takes a good climber to get it down. The plants are brittle and a hard fall will shatter them or at least knock most of the berries off. For this reason it is often let down to the ground in a basket to prevent any damage.

(P.H.)

In the Balkan countries on Epiphany it is common for a priest to bless a metal cross and cast it into the water. In some of the countries the young men dive for the cross, and the one who recovers it is the hero of the day.



CHRISTMAS IN ENGLAND
IN THE DAVIS
HOUSEHOLD
by
Doris Davis



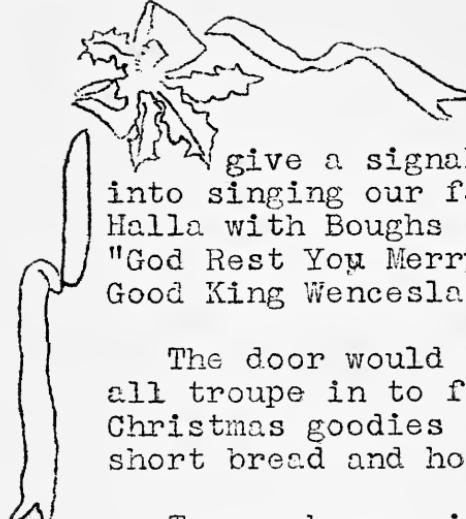
The middle of November our large cheerful kitchen began to hum with activity, the whole family gathered around the huge oblong table to prepare all the good things which go into the making of plum puddings, mincemeat, lemon cheese curd and "The Christmas Cake". Everyone would cut up citron, angelica, nuts, etc. nibbling with delight as she worked.

When everything was ready, the large copper bowl was brought out. All the tempting ingredients were dumped in. Each child in turn made a wish while she stirred valiantly. The finished product was put in pudding bowls tied up with a cloth. The puddings were steamed in a big copper cauldron over the blazing fire in the open grate.

Just before Christmas trips were made to the woods to gather holly, mistletoe and evergreens to decorate the house; always on the lookout for an extra beautiful little sprig of holly for the plum pudding.

When it came to Christmas Eve we all went forth to deliver our presents. We were all bundled up in our chinchilla coats with a knobby surface on the outside and lined with scarlet on the inside; our heads were topped with red stocking caps with a tassel on the end of the tail flying out behind when we ran to keep warm.

Arriving at the house we gathered on the



stone door step. Silent-
ly, so nobody within
would know we were
there, our leader would

give a signal and we would burst
into singing our favorite carol "Deck the
Halla with Boughs of Holly", followed by
"God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen; Noel Noel;
Good King Wenceslas."

The door would burst open and we would
all troupe in to find a table all set with
Christmas goodies of cakes, biscuits (cookys)
short bread and hot mulled cider to drink.

To our house might come the carollers
who would end up their medley of carols by sing-
ing: "Christmas is coming and the goose is get-
ting fat,

Please put a penny in the old man's hat.
If you haven't got a penny, a ha'penny will
do,
If you haven't got a ha'penny. God bless you!"

During the Christmas holidays we children
were taken up to London to the Drury Lane Theatre
to the Pantomime (generally a fairy tale set to
music). The theatre was teeming with children who
sat spellbound as they watched the antics of the
clown, the dancing of the fairies in their gossa-
mer dresses, or Peter Pan and Wendy flying out of
the window to the Never, Never, Land.

In the 4th century, Pope Julius I established Dec. 25 as Christmas. Earlier, Christians had celebrated Jan. 6, April 19, and May 20 as Christ's birthday.

Londoners were fined four pence in 1418 if they failed to hang out a "Lyghted Lanterne" at Christmastime; and the main dish at 15th century Christmas banquets was roast peacock, served with head, feathers and tail intact.



LEGENDS OF CHRISTMAS PLANTS

Christmas Rose: The legend about this flower is very ancient. It seems that as the Magi laid their rich offerings of myrrh, frankencense, and gold, by the bed of the sleeping Christ Child, a young shepherd girl stood outside the door weeping. Weeping bitterly, for she too, had sought the Babe, and wished to bring Him gifts. But she had nothing to offer, for she was very poor. She had searched in vain the countryside over for one little flower to bring Him, but the winter had been cold, and there were none.

And as she stood there weeping, an angel passing saw her sorrow and asked why she cried. The girl told him, and hearing, the angel with shining wings brushed aside the snow at her feet. Lo! the ground became carpeted with many clusters of waxen Christmas Roses.

Joyfully the shepherd girl picked some of the flowers and hurried to the Christ Child. He smiled and touched his fingers to the white flowers and the petals became tinged with pink.

Poinsettia: A little Mexican waif on Christmas Eve had no gift to take to the Cathedral, so not wishing to enter empty-handed, she picked a weed from the roadside. She knelt and laid her gift on the altar, and as she rose to go, she saw that the poor little weed was suddenly a beautiful Poinsettia or the Flor de la Noche-buena,-- Flower of the Nativity--as it is called in Mexico.

Mistletoe: The white berries are said to be the radiance caught from the guiding star when the Wise Men made their gifts to the Christ Child. They symbolize purity and peace. According

to Norse legend, the plant is sacred and must not touch the earth, hence our custom of hanging it high at Christmas. The monks of the monasteries termed it "The Wood of the Cross" and attributed to it supernatural powers.

Holly: The legends regarding the holly also date back to the days of the Druids, who believed the evergreen leaves of the holly were proof that the sun never deserted it and it was therefore sacred. Legend also says that the Crown of Thorns was composed of holly, and that before the crucifixion the berries were white, but turned crimson, like drops of blood.

In the tenth century a beautiful legend, said to have been first told by Georg Jacob, an Arabian geographer, began spreading all over the Continent. It was told that on the night Christ was born all the trees in the forest, even those in the cold ice and snow, bloomed and bore fruit. The story caught the imagination of the people, and perhaps might have inspired the custom of associating the tree with Christmas and decorating it.

Yule Log: The Druids custom was to light fires during the Yule season to burn out the sins and evils of the past year. A huge log was cut and blessed by the Druid priest. It was lighted and kept burning throughout the season. A brand was saved throughout the year to rekindle the new log at the next Yule season. In early Christian times the log became a part of the Christmas celebration. It symbolized for them Christ as the Light of the World. In Bulgaria a coin is hidden in the ashes with a wish for a plentious harvest next year. In Serbia, men strike sparks from the log, and all join together in chanting the wishes for prosperity for all. In other Balkan countries grain and wine are sprinkled upon it to insure good luck for the year.

CHRISTMAS IN MASSACHUSETTS



by Elliot Wellington

Could it be that Christmas for a boy in the Old Bay State was any different from that of any other New England boy? A flood of boyhood memories come to mind; of kind parents, loving grandparents, and I hardly know where to start or to review a life along that boyhood road of long ago.

I was one of those fortunate boys who had a Grandmother who lived with us. Minerva Beulah Goddard was her name. My other Grandmother, with another oldfashioned name-Mercy Rebecca-lived but a short distance away. Both Grandmothers were at our house on Christmas Day and it was my duty to see that Grandma arrived without mishap and in time for all the fun.

Preparations for Christmas dinner were begun several days ahead, and were much the same as for Thanksgiving. Apples were pared, meat chopped by hand in a long wooden tray for mince pies and many other jobs fell to the lot of the boys of the household. It was always some task for mother to snare the boys of the house after school and harder yet to get them started on these duties. But these and other chores just couldn't be ducked after supper. Father was home then. The woodbox in the corner of the kitchen seemed always to be empty, or if it wasn't empty it always needed filling, so mother thought.

The last school day before Christmas was one of those happy school days that writers have so much to say about. The teachers at the old School Street school that I attended always had



a party on that day with Santa Claus in person. Our janitor at the school was an old Civil War veteran who had a full flowing white beard and whose physical build was the exact type of Good Old Saint Nick. All that he needed for his part at the party was a red costume, boots and cap, and he was ready to hand out the bags of ribbon candy, nuts and cookies to all of the young gentlemen and ladies in the class. We had been working toward the grand status of gentlemen and ladies over a period of several weeks by slow and sometimes painful degrees, with frequent reminders that Santa only remembered the good boys and girls.

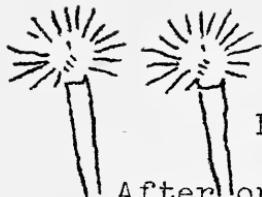
Christmas Eve at home found the fireplace mantle draped with stockings. In the morning the contents of those stockings yielded great pleasures. A stripped candy candy cane, an orange, a brand new half dollar at the toe and usually a new pair of hand-knit mittens from one or the other grandmother. There was also a box from an aunt who lived in South Dakota that always had just the things that a boy had been wishing to get at Christmas.

What boy who lived before the days when the roads had to plowed to the ground, didn't want a double-runner-a "dubbie"? Somehow it became know that I wanted a double-runner and Christmas morning I found one, taking up half of one side of the living room. It was a dandy, painted and striped, my initials on the front. My father was the superintendent of a woodworking shop and I was a regular visitor at that shop, at Leroy Hill's blacksmith shop and in Jonas Harris' paint shop. How that double-runner got built and through the shops without my knowledge is still a mystery to me, for much of my time outside of school hours was in one place or the other.

One year Christmas was delayed. About a week before Christmas my aunt arrived from South Dakota and we were anticipating a wonderful holiday. I didn't feel very well on the day she arrived and the next day the doctor said I had diphtheria. So Christmas Day came and went and I knew nothing about it. Along about the twentieth of January I was taken down stairs for a couple of hours and we had our Christmas that my younger brother had been patiently waiting for.

Time moves on and the green of todays Christmas decorations is no less bright than the memories of that boy who is now Grandpa to a couple of fine boys.

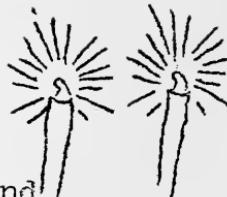
There used to be a superstition at Aberavon, in Monmouthshire, England, that every Christmas Day, in the morning, and then only, a large salmon exhibited himself in the adjoining river, and permitted himself to be handled and taken up, but it would have been the greatest impiety to have captured him. According to other beliefs, bees are heard to sing, and cattle may be seen to kneel on Christmas morning, in memory of the cattle in the manger, and sheep walked in procession, commemorating the glad tidings to the shepherds. Howison, in his 'Sketches of Upper Canada' mentions his meeting an Indian at midnight on Christmas Eve, during a beautiful moonlight, cautiously creeping along, and beckoning him to silence said in answer to his inquiries, "Me watch to see deer kneel; this is Christmas night, and all the deer fall upon their knees to the Great Spirit, and look up".



JOLIN KOMA

by

Dorothea Thompson



After only two weeks in Iceland we were faced with our first Christmas away from home. Caught up in the wave of homesickness that was unusually bad that first overseas Christmas of 1942, we were not particularly merry as we returned to our billets in an Icelandic home on Christmas Eve. No one there spoke English, and we certainly spoke no Icelandic. This is the story of how the Icelanders treated us.

The weather had turned cold and a blizzard with no small wind velocity was sweeping across the shore as we drove down the village street. Every house was blazing with lights, and even the bitter wind carried faint odors of wonderful cooking of holiday pastries.

As we arrived, suddenly the door of the house swung open and tiny Fru Johnson called gaily to us. Dressed in her very formal costume she looked the picture of hospitality. Imperiously she swept us in, even though we towered above her, and she forthwith treated us as if we were a part of her family home for Christmas.

A large tray with the inevitable coffee service and pastries dominated the living room, while on a library table was a tiny Icelandic house, covered with frosted sugar, with a red spun sugar roof. Tiny Icelandic figures on skis were enjoying their cotton snow world. Across the ceiling were hung gay colored festoons of every hue and tone. Much to our joy, behind the coffee table sat Fru Sigurdjorg Sigmundsdatter, who spoke English with a New York accent. "Sella," as she asked us to call her, explained that the Johnson family had realized that we were stran-

gers and wished to include us in their Christmas Eve celebrations.

She told us further, that the average Icelander does not always afford a Christmas tree, since the trees must be imported from America. The once famous forests of Iceland disappeared into ships and fuel long centuries ago. The little house and its figures had taken the place of the tree. She also explained that the children look forward to being old enough to be able to help with the house.

The evening was spent in drinking coffee, eating pastries, and singing carols. Many of the carols were familiar although they were sung in Icelandic. The minister arrived during the party led the singing, and at midnight said a short prayer to welcome the Christmas Day.

The second Christmas in Iceland, we tried to return some of the hospitality that had been so freely shared with us, by entertaining the grade school children of the village. It took many visits, with endless cups of coffee to persuade the Icelanders that their children would return safe and sound after such a party.

Sella was the official hostess, and dressed in the national costume to put the children at ease, for their mothers always wore the costume on formal occasions. The children arrived muffled in woolen clothing, but when layer after layer had been removed they might have passed for American children at a very dress-up party. All Icelandic children traditionally receive two complete outfits of clothing as a part of their Christmas gifts.

Each American soldier was asked to be re-

sponsible for two of the children, but the man who escorted a girl and a boy found himself in a dilemma, for the boys insisted on sitting on one side of the room and the girls on the other. Politely they insisted and followed their own customs. The traditional American Christmas party followed, but Santa Claus was not too much of a success, for the Icelandic children believe that there are thirteen dwarfs who come out of the mountains who are responsible for all of the Christmas festivities, and not one huge giant from the north pole. Santa had to be most persuasive to lure the children to the tree to receive their stockings.

When the presents and refreshments had been passed out the inevitable friendship between an American GL and a child of any nationality was ripening fast. Suddenly the children began running toward the tree, dragging their soldier friends with them. In less than a minute they were marching hand in hand around the tree, singing an old Icelandic song about the good things of Christmas time. The Americans at first looked awkward, then they began to join the chorus lustily.

Serians call the twelve days between Christmas and Epiphany nekrsteni dani, or unbaptised days, because Jesus was unbaptised during this period. All kinds of demons, and especially the souls of unbaptised children, are thought to roam abroad trying to harm human beings who spin, wash, weave or perform any other forbidden tasks during the holy season. For this reason people lay aside their usual work and devote themselves to feasting, merrymaking and visiting friends. No meat is eaten for the Christmas Eve supper; fish, beans, onions and other vegetables, as well as white wheat bread are among the special Christmas Eve foods.



WHEN I WAS A GIRL IN MAINE
by
Lillian Abbott

A traditional Christmas in Maine means to me one spent in the northern tip of Oxford County in a very small town: Upton. But it was not small to me when I was a child. It was big. Christmas was big. The month of December was terribly important and exciting.

The harbingers of Christmas were, always, the giving out of parts for the Christmas program in school, and the arrival of toys, gifts, wrappings and things which my folks had on display in their store. My brothers and sister all helped clear off two counters which were given over exclusively to Christmas things, as this was an interesting preliminary to opening our own packages a few weeks later.

Always we had a huge tree in the Congregational Church, to which every person in town able to walk or be carried went, usually on the Sunday evening nearest to Christmas Day. The school children put on the program: plays, songs and pieces, opening prayer offered by the minister, with the entire audience joining in lustily on the old favorite Christmas hymns. In about an hour we would hear the welcome breathless sound of Santa Claus's sleighbells approaching. It's a funny thing about Santa Claus, now that I am an adult and consider the matter seriously. We all knew, from as far back as any of us can remember, that he was someone we knew dressed as Santa. And I think this increased our pleasure in him as there never was a time when we were suddenly disillusioned about Santa, or that our parents had to explain. If I could go back to Upton this Christmas and go to Church along with everyone

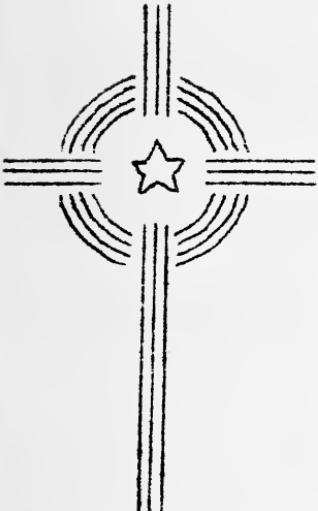


else, I'd still know and believe in Santa Claus with the same unquestioning faith I had then.

There were gifts for everyone-school exchange presents, and all children up to high school age were given presents paid for by two separate funds created for this purpose. And the Ladies' Aid tied name tags on baskets and stockings and bags of popcorn and candy for each youngster. Sweethearts exchanged their gifts which they did not want to mail or present in person. Older people in families exchanged gifts, and occasionally good-natured jokes were opened, accompanied by much hilarity.

This was, instead of Easter in our town, the time for new clothes. Rarely did one of us appear at "the Christmas Tree" without some brand new wearing apparel which we had received a bit early, and were eager to show to friends.

Christmas within our own family had its traditions, too. My father's parents lived in town and we alternated Christmas; one year we went down Mill Hill to Grandpa's, the next they came bringing presents to put under our tree. Dad, or one of the boys always got the tree some time before Christmas, and as soon as boxes came in the mail for us, they were opened and the gifts distributed under and on the tree, so that each day it became even more interesting and exciting and a focal point in our dining-kitchen-living-room. I don't remember that we ever hung our stockings; we knew it was done in some families, but it would certainly be a flat anti-climax to the gay excitement of our Community party, and the presents we saw added on the tree. Also, we always drew names among our first cousins and made the presents ourselves, or at least selected them with little parental guidance when still very young. It was this way we were taught about giv-



ing as well as receiving, and we early knew the boundless joy of making and doing for and surprising others.

Once a year, just preceding Christmas, when the weather was good, a group of older children and adults of all ages, accompanied by the minister and sometimes the teacher, would go about town singing carols. Especially we stopped at the homes of shut-ins, as we had a Christmas basket to deliver at

each of these houses. We would usually walk several miles in the course of the evening, then gather at my parent's afterward for cocoa and a lunch. Young and thoughtless and carefree as we then were, I believe we ourselves benefited more from this custom than the recipients, though it is hard to say.

Christmas vacation, besides the usual sliding parties, the exhilarating snowshoe hikes, the overnight trips to all the Woods Camps for several miles around, or so it seems in retrospect, we started cutting ice. Two men always worked together on the sawing, several were there on the lake with teams and, later, trucks, to load and haul. Most of the families in town had an ice-house to fill, and did it during vacation while older boys and girls were home to help. Occasionally if we would promise earnestly to be good and keep out of the way, one of us younger children could go for a forenoon, generally one at a time, and generally only once during the season. There wasn't time to be keeping watch on kids playing and I don't suppose Mama ever felt really safe in letting us go!

Seems like, to me, the one quality which all

Christmasses had for me, for my folks, for all of us, was the togetherness, the community spirit which nobody talked about, but everybody had. Perhaps and probably the grown-ups had financial and other worries and troubles, but they never allowed them to cloud the wonderful traditional Christmas celebrations I always knew.



SYRIA & THE HOLY LAND

by

Phil Maron

It seems that the average person has never heard of Syria, although the name, country, and people have figured prominently in the newspapers of the world recently, especially since the end of World War II.

Syria has been called the "cradle of civilization". In ancient times it was called Phoenicia. Its people were the first to build ships and trade with the world or as much of the world that was then known. In the summer of 1947, an American archaeological mission unearthed the skeleton of an eight year old child which they claim dates back 75,000 years B.C. This discovery took place about five miles from Beyrouth, the capitol of Lebanon. The Bible tells us the story of Syria from Adam up to recent times.

The Syrians are mainly a Aramean Semitic race. The chief religions are Christianity, Mohamedanism, and Jewish. To its people are credited the inventions of handwriting, navigation, glass making, house furnishings, and the development of the arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, the manufacture of jewelry and ornamental objects.

Last year, a Phoenician inscription was



discovered in Pennsylvania, marking the passage of one of their ships about the year 400 B.C. Being a peaceable nation they chose the dove as their national emblem. One of Rome's great historians, Theodore Mommsen, said, "Phoenicia must be placed on a foot of equality with Rome and Greece."

The language of the people was called "Syriac", which was also the language of Christ. There were two Syrian popes; Gizimuis of Tyre, who reigned between 707 and 708, and Constantine of Tyre from 708 to 715. The use of eggs at Easter is of Phoenician origin. The egg was also used as a symbol in pagan times, of their god Adonis, who personified nature taking new life in the spring of each year. The Christmas tree dates back to the time of the Phoenicians. They considered the cedar tree of Lebanon sacred, and have such a veneration for it that it is on their national flag.

There were two Roman emperors of Phoenician origin; Alexandre Sev're who reigned from 222 to 235, and Septeme Severe from 193 to 211.

The words uttered by our Lord on the cross (Matthew, 27:46, Mark, 15:34) "Elo, Elo, Lama Shabaktni"- "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" are Aramean.

Like the people of other nationalities, the Syrians who have immigrated to this country have brought their customs and national characteristics with them. They are intensely loyal to their adopted country and their war record substanti-



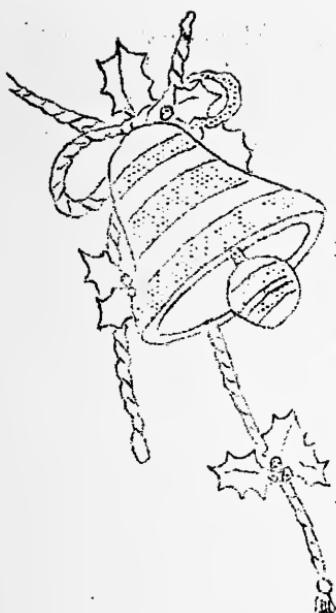
ates this statement. Also, to state a comparison, like England, The Syrians in this country are a "nation of Shakespears". They prefer going into business for themselves. Their chief

foods are rice and lamb rolled in grape leaves, kibee, which is made from cracked wheat and lamb which is called "laham mishwee" (similar to the Armenian "shish kebab").

Each year in September, the Syrians in the United States on the east coast and west coast have what is called a "Mahrajan", where a great meeting is held over the Labor Day week-end. The purpose is to meet old friends, renew acquaintances, to feast and dance and make new friends, and to renew their pledge of allegiance to the country which has given them so much.

It is regretable that no Syrian dances and customs have been incorporated in the folk dances that have swept the United States the past few years, and we hope in the near future to do something to remedy this situation. Most of the Syrian dances consist of circle dances, similar to the Kolo, and having no partners, they simply form a ring with a leader. One of the most popular dances is called the Debka. There are exhibition dances that are done at weddings and parties where a person dances alone, with hand clapping supplying the rhythm, or mandolin and violin and other percussion instruments.

In the Ukraine people at one time observed a thirty nine day fast which was ended on Christmas Eve with a twelve course dinner--one course for each of the twelve apostles. Christmas was celebrated for three days.



EARLY CHRISTMAS IN
CONNECTICUT

by

Hal Brundage

Christmas has a double meaning for me, for it was on that day Dec. 25, 1888, at 5 a.m. to be exact, that I was delivered into this world, the eldest of five children. And since that day, fond parents, later joined by sweetheart and wife, and finally children, have remembered faithfully that Christmas day is Hal's birthday.

In the small western Connecticut community of family-sized farms where I was born, reared, and (aside from some years away) still live, the activities centered around the school, long since abandoned for transportation to the city school four miles away, and the small Christian Church nestled on the hillside. Aside from Sunday service and Sunday School, Christian Endeavor, and Wednesday night prayer meeting, there were four main events annually. Namely, Children's Day, Fourth of July lawn party on the green, the annual donation to the minister, and most important, Christmas. These events took on special significance as card playing, and dancing were frowned on as implements of the devil, and the entire community, aside from a few furriners lived by the Book; the Good Book, that is.

The first inkling we kids had that Christmas was fast approaching was in Sunday School, when it was announced that rehearsal for Christmas would start next Saturday at one o'clock and please be on time, also the teachers passed out



recitations and parts for dialogues, and the next few weeks were devoted to perfecting our parts. As my mother was an elocutionist the kids in our family were assigned recitations, and woe be if one of us was not letter perfect on performance night. This was accomplished too, verse by verse, with mother by our side, first the words, then the phrasing and inflections until she was satisfied. Little did I realize just how valuable that training would be to me in later life.



As there were no Christmas trees in our locality the job of gathering two large trees was usually assigned to one of the deacons, and it was a happy day for brother Gus and myself to be invited to accompany him 10 miles in quest of the trees. Bright and early on the Saturday before Christmas with chores out of the way, we set forth to an adjoining town where hemlock grew, the horses stepping lively in the crisp air, pulling the occupants in a spacious bobsled. The trip being interrupted several times while our host stopped to chat with neighbors and friends along the way. Arriving at our destination, the horses were tied, blanketed, and fed, while we searched for two matched trees to grace our church. It was short work and soon they were cut, tied and loaded, and we were on our way home, munching cookies fit for a king, thoughtfully placed under the sled seat by the neighbors good wife.



The actual work of decorating the trees was done by the oldsters after the older children had met at the parsonage to string popcorn for festoons, and make popcorn balls. There were also candy canes and ribbon candy, but little tinsel that we see today.



Finally the big night arrived and the entire populace turned out, while pop-eyed youngsters looked with awe at the wonderful sight, and many took part in the entertainment, which was always excellent. After the entertainment came the distribution of gifts, with an orange and a box of candy for everyone from the church, also gifts from teachers to pupils and vice-versa, and among friends and neighbors. They were small gifts, money wise, but were full of love and sentiment. Then there was the special box to which all had given, to be given to the widow or needy in the community, as none were forgotten at this time.

At home, stockings were hung on Christmas Eve and very early Christmas morning we eager kids were astir to see what goodies had been left by Santa. Later in the day we gathered around our tree to share in the Christmas presents.

Of course the dinner was one of the highlights of the day, as mother had spent several days preparing all kinds of food for the family enjoyment, and with relatives generally present a glorious time was enjoyed by all.

The old folks have long since passed away and I am old folks now, but descendants and new comers are adding a Community House to the rear of the little country church, on a pay-as-you-go basis. Here card playing and dancing will be enjoyed along with the other Community activities. The annual Lawn party is more popular now and more profitable, but we still live humbly and peacefully here, guided by the teachings of Him born in Bethlehem on Christmas Day 1950 years ago.

CHRISTMASTIDE IN BELGIUM

by

Martha Merrill

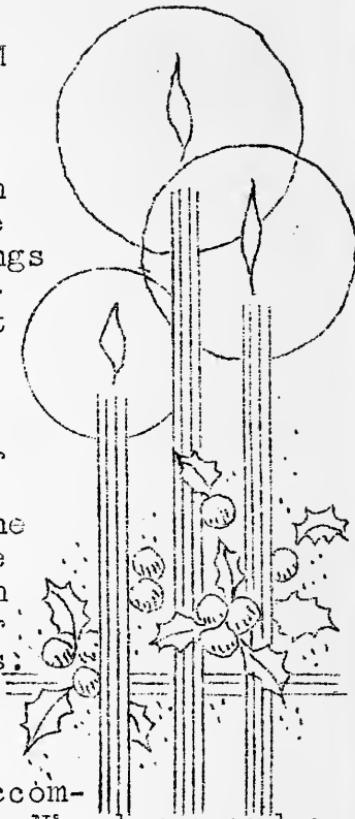
As far as the customs in Belgium are for Christmas, the children have no special goings on except for the Church Services and visit THE CRIBS, but every school has baskets in the schoolrooms and children bring clothes and sweets for the poor and the orphans. Our country does celebrate Saint Nicolas Day, Dec. 6. This is the day that is set aside for the children. Sainte Klaas day in Flemish; Saint Nicolas day for the French speaking provinces.

Saint Niklaas is always dressed like a bishop and he is always doing the rounds accompanied by his faithful helper Nicodemus and a couple of mules, one for Him and the other to carry the presents.

Children somehow want to believe in their patron Saint and the ones that have come across the truth they keep it for themselves and so enjoy it with the younger ones.

Preparations for Sainte Klaas day start a week before, we write letters and Mama or Papa very solemnly open the chimney door, and in goes the precious letter. Evenings, we sing songs in both languages, so to be sure Sainte Klaas will think of us, even if we do not understand the song.

Day before Sainte Klaas, no school. We go to the vegetable man for as many carrots and



white turnips as we have wooden shoes to set in the chimney, one shoe at home, one at Grandpapa's, one at godmother's, and as many shoes including the old worn ones go to the Aunts and Uncles. Finally, tired and happy we go to bed with a last prayer and a song.

Next morning early, we hear Mama shake up the big stove, and ready with our heavy sleeping robe and carpet slippers, we sit and wait on the top of the stairs for Mama or Papa to call us down, we really just fly down, then with hope in our hearts we start to look for traces of Peperboles on the floor (those are small hard little balls made of spicekoek, and are supposed to be left there by Sante's mule after having eaten our carrots and turnips), the door is always closed where the presents are, but somehow when we open the door all lights are on and we just stand there, mouths open, not believing what we see. All around the room are our old toys and dolls all freshly dressed and their little furniture all newly painted. Maybe there is a new dresser we needed badly, and most of us do have at least a half dozen precious dolls. Maybe they have new arms or a new toupe, but they are such a treasure to find back. A large table covered with a snow white tablecloth is in one corner of the room and all over you will find apples, oranges, marzipan, koekjes covered with sugar or annis, chocolate figurines of Sante Klaas himself, new dandy note and composition books with extra nice coverings, pen and pencils, nuts and candy. All this in a happy unorderly fashion, because Sante has not had much time and has a lot of visits to make. The smell of all those goodies and the heat coming from the red potbelly stove somehow never do leave your mind, as old or far away you are.



I wish for my grandchildren it would be the custom here, there was somehow more mystery and secrecy about it all, and if by chance you missed a toy a few weeks before you started already to think what would be done to it in Sainte's workshop. I know that when my boys were that age we had many a night session in the workroom repairing and painting the old train or horse. That room was closed with the key nowhere to be found by the small fry. Every year there will be at least one new toy you have asked for, so by the time you have grown old to know you have lots to remembor the good old Sainte Klaas by, and it feels good to have grown up and help out each year to make it happy for the young ones. It is still this way home now.

Saint Nicolas

Contributed by Mrs. Merrill

The musical score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The lyrics in French are: "Saint Nicolas Patron des Ecoliers". The second staff begins with a bass clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The lyrics in French are: "Apporte moi du sucre dans mon petit soulier". The third staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The lyrics in French are: "Je serai sage, comme un petit mouton". The fourth staff begins with a bass clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The lyrics in French are: "Et j'irai à l'école pour apprendre ma leçon". The lyrics in English are written below the French lyrics: "Saint Nicholas Patron of Schools", "Bring me sugar in my little shoe", "I will be good, like a little lamb", and "And I will go to school to learn my lesson".

French version of the same song:

Saint Nicolas Patron des Ecoliers,
Apporte moi du sucre dans mon petit soulier
Je serai sage, comme un petit mouton,
Et j'irai à l'école pour apprendre ma leçon,

Venez, Venez, Saint Nicolas,
 Venez, Venez, Saint Nicolas,
 Venez, Venez, Venez Saint Nicolas, Tra-la-la.

Another one in Flemish, but this is only done in a way like when children recite:

Sainte Klaas Kapoentje
 Bring wat in my schoentje,
 Een appeltje of een citroentje,
 Al dat or nier in on kan,
 Leg het maar opzyde,
 De meisjes zyn zoo blyde
 De jongens zyn zoo kwaad,
 Klaas smyt ze maar allemaal op straat.



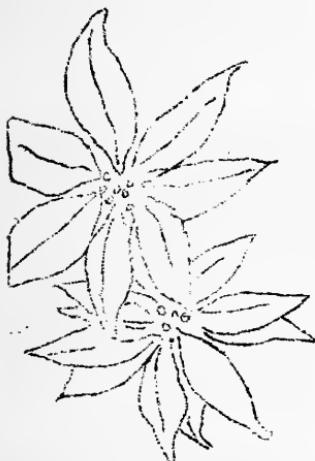
CHRISTMAS IN RHODE ISLAND

by

John T. Kenyon

During my really younger days (up to my twelfth birthday) I was a native son of Florida, having been born in Georgia and moving to Florida at the great age of one year.

In Rhode Island, when I arrived, I guess the Xmas customs did not vary too much from those in most New England states. I can remember the weeks of expectation, speculation and planning before the great day. Each of the children in my family, (brother, sister & myself) went around like angels. As each one of us was given a sum of money to spend for presents for the others and for mother and dad, the conferences between sister and brother in order to keep secret from the others what we were buying were really momentous occasions.





We would all get together and make paper chains, cranberry garlands, and popcorn balls to put on the tree after my father set it up in the front parlor.



Long hours (to us) of decorating the tree, usually about three days before Christmas, led up to the placing of the candles on the tree, and the ceremonial of lighting which took place on Christmas Eve.



Each one then brought his packages from the several hiding places and placed them under the tree. More speculation and guessing. Then to bed, usually about midnight, under strict orders not to disturb our parents before seven a.m., a rule which we really had to observe, or else.

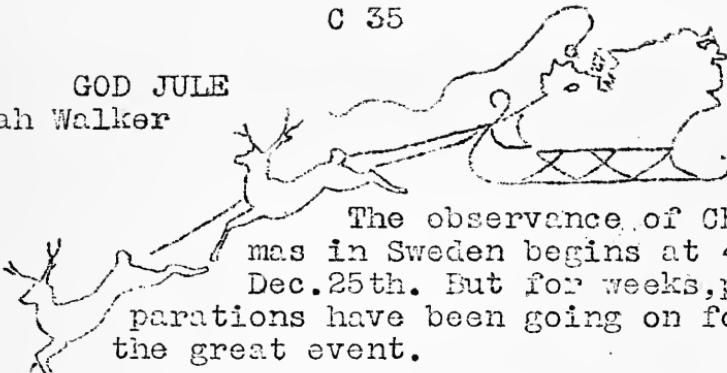
Seven a.m., and the hullabaloo was really something. Sounded like about a dozen, instead of only three. Presents from each to each, surprise on surprise and pleasure after pleasure.

From then on, after breakfast until dinner time there were mutual admiration parties of presents between us and our cousins and neighbors.

Christmas dinner was by no means an anti-climax, but quite another high spot of the day.

A French legend of the Christmas tree dates from the 13th century. Bonchevalier discovered a huge tree covered with candles in the forest. Some of the candles were upside down and some were erect; at the top of the tree was a child, a halo around his head. When asked to explain, the Pope said the child represented the Savior; the tree, mankind; and the candles, good and bad humans.

GOD JULE by Sarah Walker



The observance of Christmas in Sweden begins at 4 pm Dec. 25th. But for weeks, preparations have been going on for the great event.

"Lutfish", the national dish of my homeland, has been soaking in its special brine; head cheeses and sausages made and left to ripen and season; seven different kinds of cakes, tartes and cookies, and last, but by no means least, Swedish coffee bread, saffron and raisin bread.

The house has been made spotlessly clean from kitchen to attic. Copper kettles, silver platters and all serving dishes polished until they shine with a soft luster.

At last, everything being in readiness, the entire family gathers in the kitchen, which is lighted only by candlelight, and all are seated at one table—servants included. The head of the family stands at one end of the table holding a large loving cup filled with "glogg" (which is a special wine made by boiling raisins and spices) alcohol is added and lighted. After the master has said his toast and blown out the flame, he offers the cup to the hostess—she hands it back to him with a napkin—everyone carefully wipes where he or she has touched their lips and passes it around the table to all, children included, each saying their favorite toast. This ceremony represents the Christmas spirit, and after everyone has greeted each other with everyone standing, the father then breaks off pieces from a special loaf of bread onto a plate. Each person



takes a piece of this bread on a fork and dips it into a kettle of broth that is kept hot on the kitchen stove. Then the father offers a prayer for his family, his country and friends.

This ceremony over, everyone seats themselves around the table, and the feast is on. "Lutfish" served with potatoes and a white sauce. The dessert is a rice porridge served with sugar, cream and cinnamon. Lucky the person who finds the sweet almond that has been cooked in the porridge, for according to tradition, he or she will be married within the year. This menu is used throughout Sweden from the humblest home to the Royal Palace.

After the evening meal everyone retires to the living room where a large Christmas tree is aglow with its traditional star and angel at the top and decked with flags, red apples, gingerbread men, confetti and candy. Everyone having seated themselves, the father reads the Christmas story from the big family Bible-- of the special sign given to the three Wise Men to go to Bethlehem for "Lo a Child is born". This is followed by a prayer also.

After this solemn service has been completed, the eldest child is usually chosen to call the names on the packages under the tree, there generally being a rhyme or verse on the card to give away the nature of the gift. After receiving your gift, you rushed to the giver and curtsied if you were a girl, and a DEEP bow if a boy. Then and then only you opened the gift and rejoiced over its splendor, usually a pair of skis, skates, or a sled and clothes to go with it. And toys for the small fry. After this, fruit and candy were passed and the children hustled off

to bed as Christmas morn comes soon
and "julotta" or early mass is at
5 a.m.

You are awakened by the sound
of bells from the horses who are
ready and frisky and impa-
tient to be on their way.

Two span of horses and sometimes four, depending
on the wealth of the family. The entire family
is bundled into open sleighs and the way lighted
by blazing torches carried by the out-riders on
each side of the sleigh. Imagine, if you can, the
thrilling ride through the pitch black darkness,
the way lighted by the blazing torches, and the
soft muted sound of the bells across the country-
side.

Arriving early at the church the torches are
set in the snow and allowed to burn during the
services, and high honors to the lad who is able
to make a torch that will burn until the family
has made the return trip home. The congregation
gathers around a huge lighted Christmas tree out-
side the church, singing and rejoicing that Christ
is born. Then inside the church, lighted for the
hour-long service.

After this, the return ride home and to a
breakfast that lasts until noon, with everything
imaginable to eat. The church service and family
breakfast being the highlight of the day. The re-
mainder of the day is spent reading and resting.

Christmas Day is Holy and no company must
intrude on the Holy atmosphere of the home.

The second day called "Aunadag yul" is the
day given over for company and calling on friends
and relations.

CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS FROM ITALY

by

Margheritta C. Sachs

Preparations for Christmas start early in December. Cherries that were put in rum last August are brought from the cellar and given a place of honor on the dining room buffet. Choice wines are put in our best decanters and set in a cool place until Christmas Eve. Liquers are also handy.

Once the beverage is settled comes the planning of the menu, which consists of weeks of baking and hiding fancy cookies from the small fry, which we always managed to find. The menu for Christmas Eve, which to the Italians is just as important as Christmas Day, consists of different varieties of fish—from the lowest sardine to the delectable eel.

Antipasto—sardines, green and ripe olives strong cheese, anchovies, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, celery, pickled carrots, cauliflower peppers and beets. Soup is eliminated because a good soup needs a meat or chicken stock. (We don't eat meat on Christmas Eve).

Different varieties of fried dough is used in place of bread. Some of the dough is mixed with mashed potatoes; some is used as cauliflower fritters; fish fritters, (dried salted cod which is soaked in clear water for a few days) and some plain.

The common varieties of fish are prepared more or less in the same manner as in this country, but where butter is used here the Italians use olive oil.

I must tell you how the eel is prepared.



First they must be bought alive. I recall two days before Christmas, around noon, when the kitchen was bursting with all kinds of food preparations, and the stove going full speed ahead just burdened with more pots than it could hold, my father would walk in, both arms full of packages. "Quick!" he would say, "help me! The capitoni (the largest eel) is getting out of the wrapper again." We, the children, would scream and climb on chairs while my mother, father, and grandmother would get the eels into the bathtub. Two large and four smaller ones.

Each year my father would tell the same story, how he chased the big one for a block before he could get it back into the bag. That night, the eels would be beheaded and dressed and cut into serving pieces to be eaten Christmas Eve. It always fascinated us to see the eels still wriggling hours after they had been cleaned. The small eels were carefully fried in olive oil and served with lemon, while the larger ones which are very meaty, white and tender, are broiled, brushed with oil and vinegar, done to a golden brown and served as the 'piece de resistance'. Large fruit bowl, nuts, wine, and special hard cookies flavored with anise completes the meal.

Midnight mass is a tradition, and when home again we would gather around the tree and manger and open our gifts. Younger ones then were sent to bed, and the older group, along with special friends and relatives, would stay and play games. Christmas morning, the youngsters would visit older relatives to wish them a Merry Christmas, and show how much they had grown within a year. This is the part we liked the best, for we always come home with shiny new dollars.

"Pace in Terra agli uomini e Gloria a Dio!"

SEND
N)
MONEY!!

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

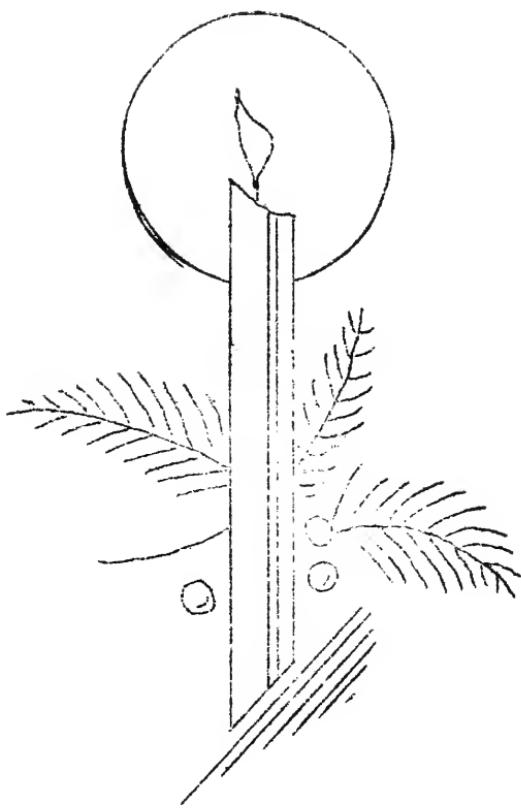
SEND
NO
MONEY

SEND NO MONEY, PLEASE. But if you would like to reserve an autographed album of square or contra dance records that we have just made for Michael Herman, under the Folk Dancer label, then send me a postcard saying so. As soon as they are released, early in the year, I'll write you, telling cost, and THEN you may send money for as many albums as you wish.

We made an album of contra dances, 12 inch, with calls. An album of music for same minus calls. Also a 10 inch album of squares with calls, and another of the same tunes minus calls. Included in this album is the famous Vermont square: HONEST JOHN, both parts, never before recorded, and known to but few callers outside of the state. Also one part of Page's Nightmare. Chinese Breakdown, and Odd Couple Promenade.

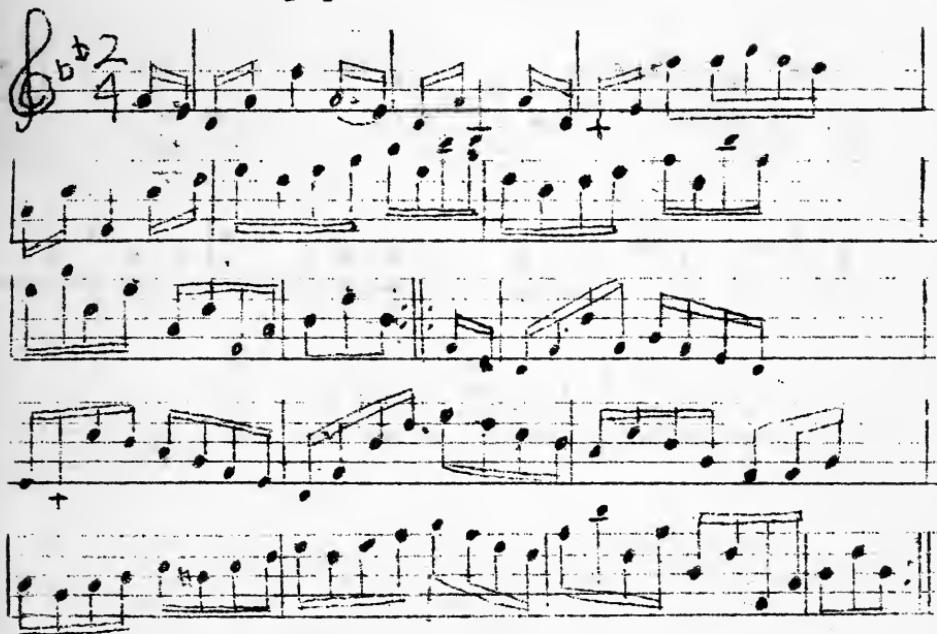
In the contra dance album is recorded, N.H. style, traditional contras such as: MONEY MUSK, CHORUS JIG, LADY WALPOLE'S REEL, and others equally as popular. And our N.H. version of the Varsouvienne, in the album without calls.

SEND YOUR CARD TODAY!



COUNTRY DANCE

Christmas Hornpipe



The Dance

Regular contra dance formation
 Any even number of couples
 1st, 4th, 7th, etc. couples start

Active ladies balance next two gents
 Three hands around with same.

Active gents balance next two ladies
 Three hands around with same.

Active couples down the center and back
 Cast off; right and left four. (with couple you
 cast off)

This is an interesting triple minor contra.
 This is the correct music for the figure, but we
 never heard any of the old time fiddlers play it.
 Very few of them could play in 2 flats. So if you
 belong in this class, play any hornpipe you wish.
 Old timers said that anyone who could play in
 more than 1 flat "warn't a fiddler, but a violin-
 ist." It didn't always hold true, though.

SQUARE DANCE

Breakdown-music Old Joe Clarke

as played by Walter Lob



The Dance

Introduction

Join your hands and all around,
 Eight hands once around,
 Guess you've got the rhrumatiz,
 Don't believe you'll ever get round.
 Break and swing your partners all,
 Exactly as I say,
 Swing your ladies everyone
 Before they run away.

Figure

The first couple promenade
 The outside of the ring,
 Take your steps in double time,
 You haven't time to sing.
 Balance corners round the hall,
 You balance one and all,
 Swing your partners round and round,
 Swing her to the wall,
 Right arm to your partner, boys,
 And grand allemand,
 Reel your own girl once around,
 And pass on to the next.
 Meet that girl with a left arm whirl,
 Then pass on to the next,
 Give that girl your good right arm,

And reel just once around.
 Now the next one by the left,
 By the left arm reel,
 Here's your own ahead of you,
 Reel her by the right,
 Pass right by, say good-bye,
 See you tomorrow night.
 Reel the ladies all around,
 But don't you hug 'em tight,
 First the right and then the left,
 You allemand right on,
 What'll we do for pork and beans
 When Joe Clark's dead and gone?
 Reel, reel, everybody reel,
 Until you all get home.
 When you're home, stand in place
 With a big smile on your face.

*

Next two promenade around
 The outside of the set,
 You haven't time to say good-bye,
 But do not sigh nor fret.
 Promenade everyone, promenade the hall,
 Walk around with Old Joe Clark,
 He ain't been here since fall.
 All join hands and circle eight
 Around Old Joe Clark's gate,
 If you stop to spark the girls
 You won't get home 'til late.
 Swing your partners all around,
 Swing 'em night and day,
 Swing hard with Old Joe Clark,
 He ain't got long to stay.

*

Third couple promenade around the outside,
 Don't know why she married you,
 She's such a handsome bride.
 Balance to your corners all,
 Balance all around, swing your partners everyone,
 Swing 'em up and down,
 All promenade with Old Joe Clark,
 Promenade I say.

Don't marry a man with whiskers on
They're always in the way.

Promenade the other way, the other way around,
Walk along with Old Joe Clark
The other way down town.

*

Last couple take a promenade
Around the outside, hurry right along to place,
With your lady by your side.
All join hands and circle eight,
Until you all get straight.
When you're home, you swing all out,
Swing your partner inside out.
Swing your honey and swing your beau,
Swing 'em fast, swing 'em slow.
Then step right back and make a bow
To your partners all.

*

Ending

Right hand to your partners now,
And grand right and left,
Grand chain half the way,
And promenade back home.
Promenade Old Joe Clark, promenade I say,
Promenade with Old Joe Clark,
As you've done many a day.
Promenade around the hall
With your lady right beside yer,
Thank the fiddlers one and all,
And I'll take a glass of cider.

There it is friends, exactly the way we use to call it a few years ago. Word for word. The calls explain themselves. The grand allemand is known in some sections of the country as the "once and a half". Call it what you've a mind to. But keep reeling once around with everyone you meet completely round the set. A word about the music. That's the way Walter Lob fiddles it. We think Walter is one of the best for his age in the country. He and the Gulyassy boys are in a class by themselves.

FOLK SONG

Mary Hamilton (The Four Marys)
 Contributed by Willie Holt



Tune from Mr. Leonard Stevens, Exeter, N.H.
 Words from various sources.

*

Word's gone to the kitchen,
 Word's gone to the hall,
 That Mary Hamilton's gang with bairn
 From the highest Stuart of them all.

He courted her in the kitchen,
 He courted her in the hall,
 He courted her in the laigh cellar,
 And that was the worst of all.

She pied it in her apron,
 And throwed it in the sea,
 Saying "Sink ye, swim ye bonny wee babe,
 You maun get no mair of me!"

Oh Mary, put on your robes of black,
 Or else your robes of brown,
 For you must go this night with me
 To see fair Edinb'ro town.

I will not put on my robes of black,
 Or else my robes of brown,
 But I'll put on my robes of white
 To shine through Edinb'ro town.

As she walked up the Cannon-gate
 She laughed loud laughters three,
 But as she came down that Cannon-gate
 The tears blinded her ee.

Oh little did my mother ken
 The day she cradled me
 Of the lands I was to travel in
 The death I was to doo.

Last nicht I washed the queen's own feet
 And lay her gently down,
 And all the thanks I've got this nicht
 Is to hand in Edinb'ro town.

Last nicht there were four Marys,
 Tonicht there be but three.
 There was Mary Eaton, Mary Seaton,
 Mary Carmichael and me.

*

Instead of a folk dance this month we are giving you the music for The Christmas Polka. We found it in a huge book "A Holiday Book for Christmas and the New Year". Published in England about the middle of the last century. Here it is

This is just a tune to polka
 No special dance for it.

Back to beginning



A SHORT OUTLINE OF MINSTRELSY

The Christmas season during the age of minstrelsy, found this class of men at their zenith. Christmas without song would be a poor time indeed, and none of the early accounts of Christmas festivities complain of a dearth of song and merriment. If there was any one season of the year when it could be said that 'they came into their own' this was it.

Minstrels of the Middle Ages certainly did not desert the baronial halls. There were few Yule-logs dragged into the halls without at least one minstrel leading the way and singing a carol for the occasion, such as:

"Come bring, with a noise,
My merry, merrie boys,
The Christmass Log to the firing;
While my good Dame she
Bids ye all be free,
And drink to your hearts desiring.
With the last year's Brand
Light the new Block, and,
For good successe in his spending,
On your psaltries play,
That sweet luck may
Come while the Log is a teending. (burning)
Drink now the strong beere,
Cut the white loafe here,
The while the meat is a shredding;
For the rare mince-pie,
And the plums stand by
To fill the paste that's a kneading."

These Yule-logs were, in fact, great trees, and it must have taken a vast amount of heaving and hauling to get them from the woods to the fire. Consequently, a song would make the task noticeably easier.

Bringing the Boar's Head in to the feast was done in great state and solemnity. Laid on a great earthen or wooden platter, it was carried from the kitchen to the banquet hall on the shoulders of two stalwart men, preceded by one or two minstrels singing:

"The Bore's Heade in hande bring I,
With garlandes gay and rosemary,
I pray you all syng merely,
Qui estis in convivio.

The Bore's Heade, I understand,
Is the Chefe servyce in this lande:
Loke wherever it be fande
Servite cum Cantico.

Be gladde, Lordes, both more and lasse,
For this hath ordayned our stewarde
To chere you all this Christmasse,
The Bore's Heade with mustarde.

The minstrels had much to do with preserving many of the earlier carols. This does not seem so strange when one realizes that the word carol has a dancing origin. The best authorities say the word once meant to dance in a ring. The carol, by forsaking the timeless contemplative melodies of the church began an era of modern music, which has been based upon the dance. (from The Oxford Book of Carols)

The minstrels, by keeping alive and developing their art, aided in the drawing together, with a new music, in what was still almost a new language, of minstrel, literary, and folk poetry in

the 15th century. Chaucer was dead; and it was not a great age of English verse, except for the ballads and songs, and for the carols.

The ballad was early known as a dancing song, and was a form in which many of our traditional carols have been cast.

The minstrels were well paid for their caroling too. Warton mentions two celebrated itinerant ballad, and therefore doubtless, carol singers, about the middle of the 16th century named, Outroaringe Dick and Wat Wimbars, who occasionally made 20s a day. Taking into account the difference of value of money, their gains were large enough to tempt many a modern day caroler.

The refrains of some of the early English carols seem quite inexplicable to us. Unless we suppose with some learned expositors, that the common "Down derry down" has reference to the oak, and is derived from the Druid, "Hob y deri danno;" but then how are we to explain "Hey troly loly lo" and "Dumble dum deary"? In the Elizabethan age, "Hey nonny, nonny" was quite a favorite. The minstrels loved such nonsensical phrases, as it permitted them to wear on their faces an appearance of great learning.

Many of the carols of this time were of two descriptions: One of a serious sort, sung commonly in churches, and a festive carol, that was sung through the streets and from house to house even as today. The festive carols were sung by the company, or by itinerant minstrels. Some of them were called wassail songs.

The city of London had its official minstrels for the Christmas season. They are described as having blue gowns, red sleeves and caps, and every one having his silver collar about his neck. Several other towns also had an

official group of minstrels or waits as they were sometimes called, and there are many entries of payments made to them by the kings and noblemen of the period. One of the old towers of Newcastle was formerly called the wait's tower, and was the place of their meeting. There is a tradition of their having played to Oliver Cromwell on his route to or from Scotland.

Yes, the minstrel was an important personage at the Christmas season of a few centuries ago. Whenever you sing carols at this time of the year give a thought to those men dressed in their gay finery, with sprigs of holly in their hats, singing their hearts out in praise of Him who was born this Day. They were happy about it and we should be, too. We owe them a great debt.

"Noel, noel, noel, noel,
Christ is born in Israel."

(to be continued)



NORTHERN JUNKET, Monthly, Vol. 1; No. 8, 1949
 Two dollars a year, 20¢ per copy
 Make checks or money order payable to
 Ralph G. Page, 182 Pearl St. Keene, N.H.

Editor ----- Ralph Page
 Associate editors ----- Joe Blundon
 Gil Daniels

